

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Upper Toe River Barrier Assessment

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

While improvements in water quality can literally mean life or death for fish populations, there is another facet to the story of creating vibrant, bountiful, healthy rivers. What if a fish had miles and miles of cool, clear, clean river to enjoy, but couldn't get to it? It's an issue faced across the Southern Appalachians as poorly designed, installed, or maintained bridges and culverts can block passage by fish, crayfish, and other aquatic life.

We've all seen what's referred to as a perched culvert – a pipe going under a road whose outlet sits above the stream, creating a small waterfall. Problem is, fish may not be able to get up that waterfall. Fixing that culvert can allow aquatic animals to move up and downstream into areas previously closed off to them, making it a simple, straight-forward way to improve stream diversity and health,

There's currently a project getting underway to assess barriers to stream movement, like perched culverts, in the Upper Nolichucky River system. With the assessment in hand, biologists can then identify the most egregious problems and work to correct those that would provide the greatest benefit. This effort follows closely on the heels of a similar effort in the Little Tennessee River basin.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.